

What is claimed is:

1. A method of preparing a patient for the insertion of a needle into a vein,
comprising the steps of:

- 5 a. providing an inflatable tourniquet including an inflatable occluding band, a
pump, and a pressure relief valve;
- b. placing said occluding band about a limb of a patient; and
- c. inflating said occluding band using said pump, so as to produce sufficient
10 pressure within said occluding band to block blood flow in said vein of said
patient.

2. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 1, wherein said
inflating is insufficient to block arterial flow to said vein.

15 3. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 1, wherein said
inflating is initially sufficient to block arterial flow to said vein.

4. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 3, further comprising
the step of providing a gauge with a needle that pulses with each cardiac contraction of
20 said patient.

5. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the step of palpation of said patient's pulse.

6. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 5, further comprising the step of releasing said pressure when said pulse is no longer palpable.

7. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 6, further comprising the step of detecting said pulse.

8. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 7, further comprising the step of ceasing said releasing of said pressure when said pulse is detected.

9. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the step of providing an indicator for detecting said patient's pulse and signaling thereof.

10. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 9, further comprising the step of releasing said pressure when said pulse is no longer palpable.

11. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 10, further comprising the step of detecting said pulse.

12. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 11, further comprising the step of ceasing said releasing of said pressure when said pulse is detected.

13. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 1, further comprising the step of releasing said pressure until said vein protrudes.

14. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 13, wherein said releasing is performed in steps so as to allow sufficient time for the blood flow to build up within said vein.

15. The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 14, further comprising the step of inserting a needle into said vein.

16. An inflatable tourniquet comprising:

- a. an inflatable occluding band, for placement about a limb of a patient;
- b. a pump for inflating said occluding band, wherein said pump is capable of producing sufficient pressure within said occluding band so as to block blood flow in a vein of said patient;
- c. a fluid conduit, in fluid communication between said occluding band and said pump; and
- d. a pressure relief valve, for releasing the fluid from said occluding band.

17. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 16, wherein said tourniquet does not include a mechanism for measuring blood pressure.

18. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 17, further comprising a pressure gauge, for measuring pressure within said tourniquet.

19. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 18, further comprising an indicator, for sensing and indicating said patient's pulse.

20. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 19, wherein said indicator emits a signal in response to said sensing of said pulse.

21. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 20, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is a visual signal.

22. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 20, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is an audio signal.

23. An inflatable tourniquet consisting of:

- a. an inflatable occluding band, for placement about a limb of a patient;
- b. a pump for inflating said occluding band, wherein said pump is capable of producing sufficient pressure within said occluding band so as to block blood flow in a vein of said patient;
- c. a fluid conduit, in fluid communication between said occluding band and said pump; and
- d. a pressure relief valve, for releasing the fluid from said occluding band.

24. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 23, further consisting of a pressure gauge, for measuring pressure within said tourniquet.

25. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 23, further consisting of an indicator, for sensing and indicating said patient's pulse.

26. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 25, wherein said indicator emits a signal in response to said sensing of said pulse.

27. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 26, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is a visual signal.

28. The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 26, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is an audio signal.

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